

# The Last Emperor in the *Primary Chronicle of Kiev*

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*The Primary Chronicle of Kiev was largely influenced by the popular apocalypse known as the Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius. Embracing an historical view of the Revelation, the later chronicler connected the catastrophes and wars during his lifetime with a larger concept in which the end of the world was attentively awaited. In this scene the nomadic tribe with mastery over the Eurasian steppes at the time, the Polovtsy – better known in the west as Cumans – were seen as the Ishmaelites, a nation whose onslaught was a prelude to events preceding the end of the world. In this article I will discuss the Revelation’s crucial theme, namely the Last Emperor, as treated in the Primary Chronicle. I argue that the role of the Last Emperor was invested in two warlords of the Polovtsy wars: first, in Prince Svyatopolk (ruled 1093–1113), whose Christian name, Michael, had vital significance and even pre-ordained his faith as shown in the Chronicle; and second, after Svyatopolk’s death in 1113, in his follower, Vladimir Monomakh (ruled 1113–25), who was of Greek descent.*

## Introduction

The *Primary Chronicle of Kiev* belongs to a group of so-called ‘national’ chronicles from eastern Europe, which materialised around the twelfth century when Christianity was already firmly established, a new literary culture was on the rise and the development of the early medieval states was well underway.<sup>1</sup> The new literate cultures created visions of the past in which the roots of the “new people”, as the baptised former pagans formulated their position in God’s flock, were envisaged. In a line of new histories for a new people was the *Primary Chronicle of Kiev*, written at the very beginning of the twelfth century, one of the most original medieval chronicles of the Middle Ages.

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1 See Garipzanov, Geary & Urbanczyk 2008.

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Recently, a discussion has arisen about how we should translate the title of the *Primary Chronicle of Kiev*, whose full title reads Повѣсть временныхъ лѣтъ чьрноризьца Феодосиева монастыря печерьскаго, отькуду есть пошьяла русьская земля и кѣто въ ней почаль пьрвѣ кѣняжити, и отькуду Русьская земля стала есть.<sup>2</sup> In general usage, the *Primary Chronicle* is simply called by its three first words in Russian and has customarily been translated into English as the ‘Tale of Bygone Years’. This follows the work’s translation into modern Russian as *Povest’ minuvshikh let* by Dimitry Likhachev,<sup>3</sup> who particularly underlined the aspect of the years that had passed. The recent discussion has emphasised that the word временныхъ (*vremennykh*) should actually be translated as ‘temporal’, ‘chronological’, ‘worldly’ or even ‘temporary’.<sup>4</sup> It has also been suggested that the translation should reflect the chronological order of the years and could be translated as ‘The Tale of the Numbered Years’.<sup>5</sup> In each of these translations we are confronted with time and its limits, and it is from this perspective that I am going to examine the *Primary Chronicle* here.

Specifically, in this article I will investigate how the narrative in the *Primary Chronicle* deals with the idea of temporary and numbered years, giving special attention to the beginning and ending of its annalistic portion. I will further examine the chronicler’s perception of time by concentrating on certain rulers, who in my view represent central characters in the narrative structure. Particular consideration will be given to the wars of the Christians and the apocalyptic expectations associated with them around the time of the First Crusade in order to place ideas of time and its end in a wider, Christian context and demonstrate how the *Primary Chronicle* reflected these ideas.

I will begin my survey with the *Chronicle*’s first annual entry, which combines Rus’ rulers with imperial and Christian leaders and marks the year when Rus’ history begins. Secondly, I will give a brief overview of Byzantine apocalyptic imagery and how it was connected with the image of Rus’. Lastly, I attempt to show how the *Primary Chronicle* reflected this Byzantine imagery, wherein Rus’ was presented as a threat to Christians, and delivered a self-conscious Kievan response to testify that

2 PVL 0,1–0,4. As my *Primary Chronicle* reference, I use Donald Ostrowski’s reconstruction of the alpha text in Ostrowski, Birnbaum & Lunt 2004. It must be said, however, that the existence of чьрноризьца Феодосиева монастыря печерьскаго in the alpha text is highly controversial. See, for example, O. Tolochko 2006, 248–251. In the English translation I am basically following Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953. Both Ostrowski and Cross use the numbering that coincides with Karskiy’s edition of the *Laurentian Chronicle* in 1926 in the series *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey*, where the number before the comma designates the column and the number after the comma indicates the line.

3 Likhachev’s first translation of the *Primary Chronicle* was completed in 1950 together with B.A. Romanova in Adrianova-Perets (ed.) 1950. In the second printing Likhachev alone was responsible for the translation; see Adrianova-Perets (ed.) 1996. In his commentary on the *Chronicle* Likhachev justifies the emphasis in the translation as ‘years gone by’, making it parallel to the Slavonic translation of the *Chronicle of George Hamartolus* and its view of past events. See Likhachev 1996, 379.

4 See the discussion in Franklin & Shephard 1996, xviii; Lunt 1997, 317–326; Ostrowski 2003, LXI–LXIII, and Prokhorov 2006, 6–7.

5 P. Tolochko 2011, 266.

the real threat lay elsewhere. In this imagery the roles of the Polovtsy whom the chronicler referred to as Ishmaelites and that of the Kievan prince were fundamental. Awareness of the limits of time evidently made the chronicler choose a narrative strategy that ultimately had a tremendous impact on the eschatological role of the last rulers dealt with in the *Primary Chronicle*, namely Prince Svyatopolk Izyaslavich and his cousin and successor, Vladimir Monomakh.

### The First Annual Entry

The *Primary Chronicle* begins with a description of the postdiluvian world, showing how different nations were spread around the globe. It also describes different pagan nations and their habits, making a clear distinction between those and the laws of the Christians. The introduction ends with the notion of how the two-edged sword of the Rus' conquered the one-edged sabre of the Khazars.<sup>6</sup> After this introduction, annual entries begin in the year 6360 (explained below) from the Creation. The *Primary Chronicle* states that in that year the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Michael began:

In the year 6360, the 15th indiction, from the beginning of Michael's reign, the land of the Rus' [Русьская земля] began to be so called. We know that it was during this emperor's reign that Rus' came to Tsargrad, because it is stated in the Greek chronicle. Hence, we shall begin at this point and establish the number of years.<sup>7</sup>

The year 6360 corresponds to 852 AD according to the usual Byzantine and Kievan practice, but it is clear that the attack to which the chronicler is referring did not take place during that year, but later, in 860. One of the main reasons for the chronological problems in dating the first annual entries in the *Primary Chronicle* derives from its main source, the *Chronicle of George Hamartolus*; there the description of the events relating to the history of Byzantium was not arranged according to annalistic structure, and thus lacked the annual entries.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> PVL 16,21–17,24.

<sup>7</sup> Въ лѣто 6360, индикта 15, начьньшю Михаилу цсарьствовати, нача ся прозывати Русьская земля. О семь бо увѣдохомъ, яко при семь цсари приходиша Русь на Цсарьградъ, яко пишеть въ лѣтописании Грьцьскомъ. Тѣмъ же и отъселе почьнемъ и числа положимъ. PVL 6360 (852), 17,25–18,1.

<sup>8</sup> The Byzantine chronicle written by a monk who called himself George 'the Sinner' (Greek: Hamartolos, ἁμαρτωλός), tells the history of the world from the Creation up to the Council of Constantinople in 842–43. In the middle of the 10th century the *Chronicle of George Hamartolus* was continued up until the year 948, and in this continued, expanded version, it was translated in the Slavonic in the 11th century. In this continued, expanded version, the chronicle was translated into Slavonic in the 11th century. On the basis of the large number of Russisms in its language, the majority of scholars believe that the oldest Slavic translation of Hamartolus's chronicle was made in Kiev. See the discussion in Istrin 1920, v–vii; Istrin 1922, 273–305; Istrin 1930, xliii–l; Franklin 1988, 324–330; Ansimova 2009, 9–11, 21–25. The monk George reconstructed his chronicle according to the reigns of the emperors, as sequences of biographies. He not only divided the stream of events into reigns, but also systematically destroyed the principle of annalistic narrative, which was the attitude that had characterised the whole epoch of Byzantine chronographical literature during the time that Alexander Kazhdan has called an Epoch of Encyclopedism (ca. 800–1000 AD); see Kazhdan 2006, 324–325.

After the reference to Emperor Michael and after establishing the numerical starting point for the years, the *Primary Chronicle* links the chronology of the world with the appearance of the Rus' in a short chronological list:

From Adam to the Flood was 2,242 years; from the Flood to Abraham, 1,082 years; from Abraham to Moses' departure [from Egypt], 430 years; from Moses' departure to the reign of David, 601 years; from David and the beginning of the reign of Solomon to the captivity of Jerusalem, 448 years; from the captivity to the reign of Alexander, 318 years; from Alexander to the birth of Christ, 333 years; from the birth of Christ to Constantine, 318 years; from Constantine to this Michael [до Михаила сего], 542 years.<sup>9</sup>

Again, the computation of the chronological list presented above is derived from very problematic chronological sources.<sup>10</sup> However, the entry is interesting in its message, for it solemnly identifies the Rus' war against Byzantium as the beginning of Rus' written history, beginning its yearly entries with the Byzantine emperor Michael III, who in reality began his rule as a two-year-old in 842 AD, and whose reign ended with his murder in 867. In the *Primary Chronicle* Michael III serves as the historical figure linking the rulers of Rus' to the Christian emperors and, through them, to world history, as it was then known. After this first entry, in the year 6360, the rest of the *Chronicle* is structured both according to rulers and by year. The chronicler faithfully recorded each and every year, but also marked the beginnings of the new reigns of the Kievan princes with clauses written in cinnabar. The first year of the Byzantine Emperor Michael's reign is thus significant in connecting the *Primary Chronicle* with known universal history by counting the time from the Creation to 'this Michael'. After the Emperor Michael, the chronicler lost interest in Byzantine rulers and continued the list with Rus'ian princes right up to the death of the Kievan Prince Svyatopolk:

And from the first year of this Michael to the first year of Oleg, Rus' prince, 29 years [А отъ първаго лѣта Михаила сего до първаго лѣта Ольгова, Руськаго кнѣзя, лѣтъ 29]; from the first year of Oleg, who sat on his throne in Kiev, to the first year of Igor, 31 years; from the first year of Igor to the first year of Svyatoslav, 33 years; from the first year of Svyatoslav to the first year of Yaropolk, 28 years. Yaropolk reigned 8 years, Vladimir reigned 37 years, and Yaroslav reigned 40 years. Therefore, from the death of Svyatoslav to the death of Yaroslav is 85 years, and from the death of Yaroslav to the death of Svyatopolk, 60 years.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> PVL 6360 (852), 18,1–18,10.

<sup>10</sup> On the illogicality of the *Primary Chronicle*'s chronology see Danilevskiy 1995, 101–110. See also Likhachev 1996, 396; Petrukhin 2000, 70. On the different ways of counting the years of Emperor Michael III's reign, see Vasiliev 1946, 152.

<sup>11</sup> PVL 6360 (852), 18,11–18,21.

Prince Svyatopolk Izyaslavich, the last Rus' prince mentioned in the list is, in fact, 'the other Michael', for in accordance with Rus'ian practice, princes had two names: an ancestral Slavonic name with dynastic significance and a Christian name, given to a child when he was baptised. The dynastic Slavonic names usually had a military connotation, like Svyatopolk, which means 'holy regiment'. Svyatopolk's Christian name – Michael – formed a perfect match with his ancestral name, for with this name the Archangel Michael himself, the leader of the heavenly host, became Svyatopolk's personal patron saint. Needless to say, names of the ruling princes were very carefully selected. In the Kievan princely dynasty the child who bore an ancestral name also bore the faith of his name-bearer; it was as if the name-bearer was newly incarnated in every child who assumed his name.<sup>12</sup> The same solemn meaning was attached to Christian names. Often the first pagan rulers who were baptised into the Orthodox Christian faith were given the names of ruling Byzantine emperors, who acted as their godfathers at the baptism. Thus, the Bulgarian Khan Boris, who in 864 AD became Christian, was given the name Michael after Emperor Michael III. The same applied to the first Kievan prince to be baptised, Vladimir Svyatoslavich (d. 1015), who was given the name Basil (Vasili) after his military ally and godfather, Basil II (reigned 976–1025).

I contend that the name of Prince Svyatopolk-Michael determined the prince's destiny in the narrative of the *Primary Chronicle*, and not only his destiny, but also the destiny of Rus' itself. Chronological time in Rus' began with the rule of the Byzantine Emperor Michael; below I will argue that the *Primary Chronicle* narrative suggests that time was actually supposed to end with the ruler called Michael, for the name Michael was attached not only to an angel with eschatological significance, but also to the figure of the Last Emperor, familiar to the writer of the *Primary Chronicle* from one of the most influential apocalypses of the Byzantine world, the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*.

The *Revelation* is a text composed in Syriac towards the end of the seventh century soon after Syria was conquered by the Arabs. After the text was translated into Greek, the *Revelation* gained immense popularity and marked a new era in Byzantine eschatology, strongly influencing the whole genre of apocalyptic writing. From Greek, the work was almost immediately translated into Latin, and eventually into Slavonic. The Slavonic translation was carried out relatively early, possibly right after the Christianisation of Bulgaria, during the reign of Boris (died in 889), but at the latest by the end of

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<sup>12</sup> See Litvina & Uspenskiy 2006, 44, 59, 605.



the tenth century and from a Greek original representing the first Greek redaction.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the *Primary Chronicle* cites the *Revelation* (as will be discussed later in this article) speaks for its early dissemination in Kievan Rus'.<sup>14</sup>

There were several Byzantine and Slavonic apocalyptic texts in which Michael appeared as the mythical emperor of the End Time, triumphing over either Ishmaelites or the race called 'Blonde Beards'. Michael as the name of the Last Emperor is mentioned in many of the late eleventh-century Bulgarian apocalyptic texts influenced by the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, such as the *Vision of Daniel*, the *Interpretation of Daniel* and the *Narration of the Holy Prophet Isaiah*, where especially in the last mentioned, reference was made to the Bulgarian Khan Boris-Michael.<sup>15</sup> The *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* does not, however, mention the name of the Last Emperor; connecting the name Michael with the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* was done fairly late, only in the so-called 'Third' or 'Interpolated Slavonic Redaction'.<sup>16</sup> V.M. Istrin suggested that the name Michael for the Last Emperor was originally of Greek origin, and it has survived only in the Slavonic version of the text, as the name was especially valued in the folk traditions of Slavonic-speaking areas.<sup>17</sup>

13 See Alexander 1971, 61; Alexander 1978, 1; Alexander 1985, 60–61. The Syriac text has been preserved in the 16th-century Vatican ms known as Codex Syriacus 58 and has been published and translated in Martinez 1985, 122–154; it is also translated in Alexander 1985, Appendix: 36–51. Parts of the texts are translated in Reinik 1999. Four Greek redactions were published by Istrin 1897, 5–74; Lolos 1976 and Lolos 1978. Istrin also published an 11th-century Latin ms, which he called the *Short Latin Redaction* in Istrin 1897, 75–83. Slavonic texts of the *Revelation* fall into three phases according to their translation dates, and all were published by Istrin. The earliest translation was actually done twice from the same original at the end of the 10th century: first, the so-called 'Free Translation' followed by the 'Literate' translation. Istrin published the *First Slavonic Translation*, which represents the 'Free Translation' from the 13th- and early 14th-c. ms from the Athos Monastery of Hilandar. Later, during the 14th century, another translation from another Greek text of the *Revelation* was made in Slavonic. Istrin published it based on the 15th-century ms from the Athos Monastery of Hilandar and called it the *Second Translation*. See Istrin 1897, 174; Thomson 1985, 143–173; compare Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 218–219. Whereas the *First* and the *Second Slavonic Translations* of the *Revelation* follow the original text quite carefully and have only slight differences, the *Third* has numerous interpolations from other apocalyptic writings and has no examples in existing Greek variants of the *Revelation*. Istrin 1897, 84–131. Recently, V. V. Mil'kov published this *Third, Interpolated Redaction* of the Slavonic *Revelation*, but without deeper study of the subject. See Mil'kov 2000 and Mil'kov 1999. Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011 recently published a thorough study concerning Bulgarian apocalypses, but unfortunately the viewpoint of their massive investigation is narrowly restricted to the Bulgarian context of the text material and completely ignores Kievan Rus' in their discussion. They also published one variant of the *First Slavonic Translation* from the 12th century; see Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 227–256.

14 PVL references to the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* differ that much from the known Greek and Slavonic texts, that is has been suggested that the Kievan chronicler quoted the *Revelation* from his head. See Istrin 1897, 144. Recently, however, Donald Ostrowski proposed that the Kievan chronicler had at his usage a text (either Slavonic or Greek) which has not survived. Ostrowski 2014, 215–242.

15 All these texts are published in Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 141–217. According to Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova, the apocalyptic figure of Emperor Michael was explicitly developed in Bulgaria to commemorate the baptised Khan Boris-Michael. See Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 87–98. The Byzantine group of apocalyptic texts connected to the Prophet Daniel was heavily influenced by the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*. The original text of the *Vision of Daniel* is not extant, but it has been preserved in the Slavonic translation; see Alexander 1985, 61.

16 Interpolated into the text are excerpts from the *Vision of Daniel* and the *Vision of Andrew the Fool* (Andrew of Salos). It has generally been suggested that there must have been a Greek text as the source of the *Interpolated* or *Third Slavonic Redaction*. See Veselovsky 1875a, 283–331 and Veselovsky 1875b, 48–130; see also Vasiliev 1946a, 237–248, here esp. 247. See also Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 88. The *Third, Interpolated Slavonic Revelation* was first published by Tikhonravov, who based it on a much later manuscript, but which, from its content, was very close to the 16th- and 17th-century manuscript published by Istrin 1897, 115–131. See Istrin 1897, 175. The text has also been recently published by Mil'kov 1999, 654–688; see the Russian translation with commentary on 689–711. A Russian translation with commentary is also available in Mil'kov 2000, 345–380. See also Dmitriev 1987, 283–285.

17 Istrin 1897, 205–206.

## Rus' Attacks on Constantinople and Byzantine Apocalyptic Imagery

In order to understand the mental imagery with which the *Primary Chronicle* worked, it is essential to go back to the history of the Byzantine apocalyptic images, for the whole beginning of the annalistic part of the *Chronicle* placed Rus' in the sphere of written historical records via its confrontation with the Byzantine Empire. The actual events of the first Rus' attack are described in the *Primary Chronicle* entry for the year 6374, which corresponds to our year 866 AD, though we must keep in mind the problematic and incorrect computation for the first entries of the *Chronicle*. The description of the attack itself follows the Slavonic continuation of the *Chronicle of George Hamartolus*,<sup>18</sup> which describes the Rus' attack on Constantinople and gives details that allow the actual event to be dated with certainty to the year 860 AD.<sup>19</sup> The situation was paradoxical: for the Byzantines, it was a time of turmoil, signalling the end of the world and the end of history; for the Rus', however, the moment introduced the beginning of chronological time in Rus', as recorded in the *Primary Chronicle*.

The Rus' attack on Constantinople in 860 spared very few Byzantine sources. During the attack, and very soon thereafter, Patriarch Photius of Constantinople gave two sermons in which he spoke of the unknown nation that, through God's will, had come to punish the Christians. Photius referred to Rus' as a wild and blood-thirsty nation, colourfully describing its cruelties<sup>20</sup> and claiming that the attack was a consequence of the sins of the citizens of Constantinople, who had aroused the wrath of God. For Photius, Rus' was a 'new weapon of His anger'.<sup>21</sup>

Photius also made a strong appeal to another perception, crucial in the eyes of imperial citizens, given their understanding of the history and role of their empire, when he pointed out that the Christians were now the new Chosen People of God and Constantinople was their New Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> This followed an idea highly characteristic of Byzantine historians from the time of Eusebius, namely to see Byzantium and its emperor as fulfilling a divine plan. Since the seventh century, the association of Christian and Roman universalism had led Byzantine authors to refer to themselves as the 'New Israel'. By so doing, the Byzantines made a strong claim that the messianic prophecies pertaining to the Kingdom of Israel now properly belonged to the Christian empire of the Romans, as the Byzantines themselves referred to citizens of that empire. In particular, the Byzantines applied Daniel's prophecy of the four empires

<sup>18</sup> See *Khronika Georgiya Amartola*, in Istrin 1920, 511.

<sup>19</sup> See Vasiliev 1946b, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Photius, *Homilia* II, 216–232. English translation in Mango 1958, 95–110; see esp. 98–99.

<sup>21</sup> Photius, *Homilia* I, 201–215. English translation in Mango 1958, 82–95, here esp. 84. See also Photius, *Homilia* II, English translation in Mango 1958, 100.

<sup>22</sup> Photius, *Homilia* I, English translation in Mango 1958, 84.

to themselves so that they became the Last Empire.<sup>23</sup> With the idea of Constantinople as the New Jerusalem, the apocalyptic belief that the Second Coming and the Last Judgement would take place in Jerusalem was replaced by the notion that the scene of events in the final days would be Constantinople, whose faith was intertwined with the last days of the world.<sup>24</sup>

By posing a threat to Constantinople, Rus' became a target of Byzantine popular perceptions, which in turn were attached to the faith of the empire. Part of this image was eschatological fear. In popular eschatology the Apostle Paul's reference in his Second Letter to Thessalonians (2 Thess. 7–8) to a power whose removal would lead to the advent of the Antichrist was identified with the Roman Empire and taken to mean that the world would last as long as that empire; for the Byzantines, this meant that the fate of the world was tied to the fate of Constantinople.<sup>25</sup> This was the main reason why the Rus' attacks on Constantinople were seen in such an eschatological light. Even though the early Christian church relegated the belief in an imminent apocalypse to the role of symbolic theory, the popularity of apocalypses remained strong, and in the end, they played a fundamental role in creating strains of thought that shaped the imagery of things past, present and future.<sup>26</sup>

From the Constantinopolitan point of view, every threat directed to heart of the Christian empire could be interpreted in an apocalyptic light, and consequently, Rus', from the time it began its raids on Constantinople, became a target of apocalyptic imagery. It is of paramount importance to point out that, just as the threatening apocalyptic images affected how the citizens of Constantinople saw the Rus', these images also ultimately affected the self-images of the Rus' themselves. This is the issue dealt with in the *Primary Chronicle*.

Yet the most influential Byzantine apocalypse, the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, had no interest in Rus'. Instead, it offered a historiographical review reflecting the division of mankind into the descendants of the sons of Abraham: those of Ishmael and those of Isaac. The *Revelation*, recalling biblical history, relates how, after Gideon's victory, the Ishmaelites were expelled to the desert of Yathrib. It also contained a prophecy predicting a new coming of the Ishmaelites. A major part of the *Revelation* is dedicated to describing their bloody and harsh rule, which will eventually be stopped by the appearance of a Greek ruler destined to be the Last Emperor before the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the world.

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<sup>23</sup> Olster 1999, 53–54.

<sup>24</sup> See Magdalino 1993, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Magdalino 1993, 3–4.

<sup>26</sup> Abrahamse 1985, 1–2.



In the narrative setting of the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* the role of the descendants of Ishmael was central. They were introduced as a tribe who implemented the horrors of four apocalyptic riders against whom the Last Emperor would wage his final battles. According to the *Revelation*, after the Greek emperor triumphs, the last great period of peace will ensue. Peace and happiness will then be destroyed by the nations of Gog and Magog, which will be released from the mountains where Alexander the Macedonian once drove the unclean, and these nations will wage destruction on the world until the Archangel Michael defeats them on the plain of Joppe. Then the Greek emperor will travel to Jerusalem where the Antichrist will be revealed. The emperor will climb Golgotha to lay his crown on the Cross of Christ and hand over his empire to God; thereafter, he will die. The Antichrist will rule the world until Christ's Second Coming, at which time the Antichrist will be cast into hell.<sup>27</sup>

In every respect then, the imperial wars were significant by the very nature of the empire, and this had a profound effect on the perceptions and expectations of its emperor. Byzantine conceptions of the role of the emperor were intertwined with the history of the Christian empire and proclaimed in apocalyptic expectations. This especially applies to the wars during the fifth to the seventh centuries, which culminated in the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–41).<sup>28</sup> In the 620s and 630s Heraclius introduced explicitly religious overtones into his campaign against Persia and the Arabs, which led to fervent enthusiasm for the cult of the True Cross. Heraclius was later given eschatological significance, which in apocalyptic works led to the formulation of the legend of the Last Emperor.<sup>29</sup> Exactly when the notion of the Last Emperor originated is impossible to date on the basis of the sparse source material,<sup>30</sup> but the most popular and influential medieval legend about the Last Emperor is found in the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, a text whose military imagery fell on fertile ground in western Europe, especially during the time of the Crusades.<sup>31</sup>

The apocalyptic image of the violent nations devastating the empire fit splendidly with the classical image of Scythians, as brilliantly demonstrated in one of the most important early sources for the later Byzantine imagery of the Rus', namely the description of the Avar-Slav siege of Constantinople in 626, which was seen both as the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel, yet at the same time

27 See the original *Syriac Revelation* in Martinez 1985, 122–154, and its English translations in Martinez 1985, 122–154, and Alexander 1985, 36–51. Compare the *First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 84–101.

28 See Regan 2001, v–viii.

29 Paul J. Alexander made several studies of the legend of the Last Emperor, including Alexander 1971, 47–68, and Alexander 1978, 1–15, where he showed the enormous impact of this Byzantine apocalyptic theme on western Europe. His major work in Byzantine apocalyptic studies was published posthumously, in Alexander 1985. Other important studies on the topic are Reinik 1999 and Verbeke, Verhelst & Welkenhuysen 1988. Major Russian studies on the subject date from over a century ago in the works of Veselovsky 1875a, 283–331; Veselovsky 1875b, 48–130; and Istrin 1897. See also Whitby 1999, 73; Möhring 1999; Magdalino 1993, 18–19; Kaegi, 2003, 229; El-Cheikh 1999, 12.

30 See Magdalino 1993, 10–11, 19, n 65; Leadbetter 2006, 368, 377–379; Olster 2000, 48–73; Alexander 1985, 62–63, n44.

31 See Gabriele 2007, 61–82.

followed a long tradition of combining the classical nomad image of the Scythian with the Christian interpretation of the fate of the empire.<sup>32</sup> Andrew of Caesarea (563–637) saw the combined Avar and Slav forces as ‘Scythian’ hordes threatening the empire and corresponding to the unclean nations of Gog and Magog.<sup>33</sup>

In the battle of 626 the Slavs took over the naval attack, which was miraculously stopped by the Mother of God. The imagery of this unsuccessful attempt to conquer Constantinople offered a ready narrative in later Byzantine historiography and was appropriated to describe the Rus’ attack on Byzantium in 860, which for its part was further reflected in the *Primary Chronicle*’s description of that attack. The Avar-Slav attack of 626 and the Rus’ attack of 860 had remarkable similarities. On both occasions, when the attack was launched, the emperor was away from the capital: in 626 Heraclius was fighting the Persians, and in 860, Emperor Michael was fighting the Arabs, or the ‘Hagarenes’, as the *Primary Chronicle* has it.<sup>34</sup> The most notable feature in the imagery of the wars of Heraclius and Michael III was the heavenly protection of Constantinople. The Avar-Slav assault of 626 was repelled by a miraculous intervention of the Virgin, which led to the composition of the famous Akathistos hymn; the role of Patriarch Sergius in the historical imagery of the city’s survival corresponded to that of Patriarch Photius during the Rus’ attack of 860.<sup>35</sup>

The Byzantine conceptions of people from the land called Rus’ were related to an eschatological end. This fearful conception was further strengthened by the name Rus’ itself, which recalled the Prophecy of Ezekiel (38:1–4) in which Gog and Magog were depicted as rulers of Rhos who would ultimately strike God’s Chosen People. The biblical imagery of the destructive rulers of Rhos was forcefully used by one of the classical historians of Byzantium, Leo the Deacon (b. ca 950), who gave a very colourful description of the Rus’ forces in his *History*, echoing fearful millennial predictions in depicting Kievan Prince Svyatoslav Igor’evich’s raid on the Balkans in 968–71.<sup>36</sup> Leo observed that in the course of his

32 An excellent survey of Late Antiquity and Early Christian perceptions of the ‘Scythic’ nations threatening the Roman Empire is presented in Mänchen-Helfen 1973. See also McGinn 1979.

33 *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, 416c. See Mänchen-Helfen 1973, 5. Andrew of Caesarea wrote an influential commentary on the *Book of Revelation*, which was preserved in nearly 100 complete Greek manuscripts, and in Armenian and Slavic manuscripts in translation. See Maas 1907, 473. See also *Analecta Avarica*, Tom. 14, 298–320, esp. 314ff. See Magdalino 1993, 18. In particular, *Analecta Avarica*, Tom. 15, contains materials written in the 9th and 10th centuries, recalling the Avar-Slav attack on 7 August 626 and the miraculous salvation of the city. See Bibikov 2004, 289. See also Nicephorus Constantinopolitanus, *Short History*, 61. There are altogether three extant 7th-century texts relating to the events of the Avar-Slav attack in 626: a sermon attributed to Theodore Syncellos, an excerpt from the *Chronicon Paschale*, vol. I, 716–726, and a poem by Georgios of Pisidia; *Giorgio di Pisidia*. Poemi, 176–224. See Pencheva 2002, 5.

34 PVL 6374 (866), 21,11–21,12.

35 See Bissera V. Pentcheva’s study on the development of the different aspects of the cult of Virgin as the protector of the imperial capital in Pentcheva 2002, 2–41.

36 In 986 Leo the Deacon accompanied Emperor Basil II in his disastrous expedition to Bulgaria and barely escaped with his life when, on their way back, the Byzantine army was defeated by Rus’ forces. See Talbot & Sullivan 2005, 9–15. See also Kazhdan 2006, 273–288.

life many unusual events had occurred and remarked that ‘Some think that the Second Coming of the Saviour is near, at the very gates’<sup>37</sup>; he made further reference to ‘Ezekiel, who alludes to them [the Rus’, whom Leo also called Tauroscythians], when he said: ‘Behold, I will bring upon you Gog and Magog, the ruler of Rhos.’<sup>38</sup>

The Byzantine images of the nations of Gog and Magog, which God was to send from the north according to the Book of Ezekiel, were readily connected with the old stereotype of nomadic, blood-thirsty Scythians derived from the classical description by Herodotus. I argue that the author of the *Primary Chronicle* was well aware of the Byzantine perceptions of the Rus’<sup>39</sup> and therefore made an effort to show how earlier Byzantine notions of the Rus’ and their participation in the last events of the world had been erroneously constructed by presenting an alternative world view, which derived from the notion of rivalry between the descendants of Abraham. In this rivalry the Rus’ represented the descendants of Isaac, the youngest son of Abraham, Rus’ being the youngest nation of converted pagans, while the Polovtsy represented the wild and warlike descendants of Ishmael and were seen as the apocalyptic nation according to the typology of one of the most influential apocalypses of the medieval world.

### **Ishmaelites in the *Primary Chronicle*: The Rus’ Response to Byzantine Apocalyptic Imagery**

In the Bible Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, were cast into the desert when Isaac’s legitimacy was announced by God. Ishmael’s troubled relationship with his relatives was foretold when God announced to Hagar that she would bear a son who was to be called Ishmael. ‘He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.’ (Genesis 16:12.) The dichotomy between Isaac and Ishmael is absent from the Qur’an, which credits Ishmael and his father, Abraham, with building the Kaaba in Mecca as a pilgrimage destination for monotheism.<sup>40</sup>

In a widespread conception, European Christians saw themselves as the spiritual followers of Isaac, the younger son of Abraham, whose mother, Sarah, was Abraham’s lawful wife. This view was forcefully stressed by one of the most eloquent rhetoricians of Kievan Rus’, the Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev, in

<sup>37</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, IV, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, IX, 6. English translation by Talbot & Sullivan 2007, 194.

<sup>39</sup> *Sub anno* 6415 (907) the *Primary Chronicle* explains that the Greeks called a great host sent against Constantinople by Kievan Prince Oleg as people of ‘Great Scythia’ (Великая Скуфь). PVL 6415 (907), 29,25.

<sup>40</sup> Qur’an, 2:122–127.

his *Sermon on Law and Grace* (*Slovo o zakone i blagodati*), which he delivered sometime around the year 1050.<sup>41</sup> Metropolitan Ilarion discussed the story of Ishmael and Isaac as a reference to an old law of the Jews and the new grace of the Christians. He lingered over the allegory of Hagar and Sarah in speaking of ‘Law’ and ‘Grace’, but for Ilarion, the sons of Abraham offered an important analogy to Jews and Christians and had nothing to do with Muslims or Arabs.<sup>42</sup>

The terms ‘Ishmaelites’, ‘Hagarenes’ and ‘Saracens’ were valued by Muslims as indicative of their origin and of their adherence to the earliest monotheism, yet the terms were also adopted by Christian polemicists in order to demonstrate that the Muslims were illegitimate children of Abraham and false monotheists.<sup>43</sup> After the rapid Arab expansion, a large part of the Byzantine *oikoumene* – namely Alexandria, Jerusalem, Edessa and Antioch – was cut off from the Byzantine Empire, yet it continued to nurture its Orthodox heritage in circumstances where the religious opinions of Christians and Muslims clashed. In these circumstances eschatological interpretations of history arose, and the image of the Ishmaelites was given new features, as they were regarded as forerunners of the Antichrist.<sup>44</sup> The question of Muslims as ‘Ishmaelites’ or ‘Hagarenes’ became especially heated during the Crusades.<sup>45</sup> Below I seek to demonstrate how the *Primary Chronicle* uses the term in a way that is characteristic of the early eleventh century.

Isidorus of Seville (ca 560–636), the great visionary of the Visi-Gothic past, explained in his highly influential *Etymologiae* the names of the men who were founders of the peoples: ‘Ishmael, son of Abraham, from whom come the Ishmaelites, whose name now has been corrupted to Saracens (“Saraceni”), as if from Sarah, and Agarenes (“Agareni”) from Hagar.’<sup>46</sup> He also gave a fuller explanation of the term:

41 Ilarion’s famous image of ‘the shadow and the truth’, a metaphor for the Old and New Testaments, as well as for Judaism and Christianity can be traced through the church fathers, such as Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Eusebius and Jerome. See Franklin 1991, xliii.

42 Ilarion, *Slovo o zakone i blagodati*. See the English translation in Franklin 1991, 5–6. See also Hurwitz 1980, 325. As early as the 6th century in his Kontakion, ‘On the Nativity of the Virgin Mary’, the hymnographer Romanos Melodos described Sarah as prefiguring the Virgin Mary; see *Kontakia of Romanos*.

43 Sahas 1972, 70–71.

44 In 743 John of Damascus (ca 655–750) wrote his *Fount of Knowledge*, which included a chapter *De Haeresibus*, in which John discussed the heresy of the Ishmaelites. During the same year 743 Peter, the bishop of Maiuma, publicly condemned Islam, calling Muhammad a ‘false prophet’ and the ‘forerunner of the Antichrist’. Sahas 1972, 52–69.

45 See Mil’kov 2000, Senderovich 2000, 492, and Chekin 2000, 706.

46 Isidorus, *Etymologies* 9:2:6. Cf. *Chronica maiora*, § 13: ‘Abraham annorum c. genuit Isaac, ex Sara libera. Nam primum ex ancilla Agar genuerat Ismael, a quo Ismaelitarum gens qui postea Agareni, ad ultimum Saraceni sunt dicti.’ John V. Tolan assumes that Isidore had taken this identification from Jerome, who in his *Commentarii in Ezechielem* writes about ‘madianaeos, ismaelitas et agarenos – qui nunc saraceni appellantur’, Hier. in Ezech. 48,30. CCSL 75:25. See Tolan 2002, 10, 287.

Saracens are so called either because they claim to be descended from Sarah or because (as the pagans say) they are of Syrian origin, like the Surigenes. They live in a vast desert. They are also called the Ishmaelites, as Genesis teaches, because they are from Ishmael. Or [they are called] Cedar after the name of Ishmael's son. They are also called Hagarens from Hagar. They are, as we said, erroneously called Saracens, because they falsely pride themselves on being descendants of Sarah.<sup>47</sup>

Isidorus's explanation of the words Hagarens and Saracens has a strong similarity to the explanation in the *Primary Chronicle* in the entry for the year 6604 (1096 AD), where the ethnological origin of the Polovtsy as the godless sons of Ishmael is explained:

The godless sons of Ishmael, who had been sent as punishment to the Christians, killed some of our brothers with their weapons. For they came from the desert of Yathrib, from the land lying between north and east. Four branches (коленъ 4) came forth: Torkmens, Pechenegs, Torks, and Polovtsy. Of them Methodius tells that eight branches fled when Gideon massacred them; eight fled to the desert, and four he massacred. Others say that they are the sons of Ammon, but this is not true, for the Caspians are the sons of Moab, while the Bulgars are the sons of Ammon. But the Saracens descended from Ishmael became known as the sons of Sarah and called themselves Saracens, that is to say, 'We are descendants of Sarah.'<sup>48</sup>

In this way the *Primary Chronicle of Kiev* proves to be a full-fledged heir to a long medieval tradition of mapping humankind and finding a place for each nation in the postdiluvian world. Defining the relationship of the Rus' to the Ishmaelites became essential. In the following sections I will demonstrate how the *Chronicle* undertook that task.

Another important feature of the imagery of the northern nations was semi-mythical, arising from the *Alexander Romance*, which included descriptions of filthy, unclean people imprisoned behind mountains locked with iron gates by Alexander the Great.<sup>49</sup> This mythical image of the unclean nation merged with eschatological imagery, oiled by Christian conceptions of Christ's Second Coming and the end of the world, as ideas of a barbaric people whom God would send to punish the Christians at the end of time were combined in the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>50</sup>

47 Isidorus, *Etymologies*, 9:2:57. English translation in Tolan 2002, 287.

48 PVL 6604 (1096), 234,1–234,13.

49 See Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 2011, 103.

50 See the original *Syriac Revelation* in Martinez 1985, 122–154, and its English translations in Martinez 1985, 122–154, and especially Alexander 1985, 48–50. Compare the *First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 96–100.

The *Primary Chronicle* made specific reference to both Ishmaelites and the unclean nations in the entry for the year 6604 (1096), a year when the Polovtsy onslaught devastated the outskirts of Kiev and attacked the Caves Monastery itself. With this reference the chronicler sought to explain the origins of the Polovtsy, as well as their historical and apocalyptic significance by naming four steppe nations representing the tribes of Ishmaelites: the Torkmen, the Pechenegs, the Turks and the Polovtsy, all of whom had a history of confronting Kievan Rus'. Then the chronicler reveals that his imagery of the steppe neighbours of Kievan Rus' was derived from the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*. The *Chronicle* states that those four tribes were all that was left of the Ishmaelites after Gideon had slain four other tribes, as was told by Methodius.<sup>51</sup> The chronicler then strongly implied that biblical history continued in the soil of Kiev as the apocalyptic fulfilment of history.

The passage further explains the relationship between the Ishmaelites and the unclean people, stating that the unclean had descended from the Ishmaelites.<sup>52</sup> Even though the *Primary Chronicle* indicates a common origin for both groups in Ishmael, in a somewhat obscure manner it also makes clear that the unclean do not represent the Ishmaelite tribes *per se*. What united both tribes was their common mission as an instrument of God, as the *Chronicle* goes on to explain that the Ishmaelites and the unclean people will take up arms against the Christians in the last days of the world,<sup>53</sup> thereby following the original idea in the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*. The unclean people appear in the *Chronicle* in a story that the chronicler had heard from the Novgorodian Giuryata, who had travelled north in the lands of the Samoyeds and learned that human voices had been heard in the mountains. These were interpreted as voices of the people who had been shut inside the mountain by Alexander the Great according to the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, although the distinction between these two barbaric and filthy apocalyptic peoples has been made, the *Primary Chronicle* shows a tendency to combine the image of the Ishmaelites and the unclean people.<sup>55</sup> Repulsive norms were also essential to the image of the Ishmaelites in the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>56</sup> In its prediction that in the last days the Ishmaelites and the nations shut within the mountains will be set free, the *Primary Chronicle* clearly suggested that the end was near: the war against the Ishmaelites had already begun, and the filthy people were on the move, their voices already heard.

<sup>51</sup> PVL 6604 (1096), 234,3–234,9.

<sup>52</sup> PVL 6604 (1096), 234,19–234,22.

<sup>53</sup> PVL 6604 (1096), 236,12–236,15.

<sup>54</sup> PVL 6604 (1096), 234,23–236,15.

<sup>55</sup> PVL 16,12–16,20.

<sup>56</sup> See the original *Syriac Revelation* in Martinez 1985, 122–154; its English translations in Martinez 1985, 122–154, and especially in Alexander 1985, 46 and the *First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 95.



## The Wrath of God

As the heirs of Abraham and his son Isaac with whom God made His covenant, the Rus' had to earn His protection by righteous behaviour. When His people did not behave righteously, God chastised and punished them. In the *Primary Chronicle* we find the idea of God's punishment and the notion of apocalyptic expectancy tied together. Along with adopting the images of Ishmaelites from the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* whenever Rus' wars against the Polovtsy are mentioned, the *Primary Chronicle* simultaneously stressed the chastisement of God and called on people to repent. The sermonising attitude connected with the lost wars against the Polovtsy appears forcefully made for the first time in the *Chronicle's* entry corresponding to our year 1068, when 'a great host of strangers, numerous Polovtsy'<sup>57</sup> fought against the joint forces of the Rus' princes Izyaslav, Svyatoslav and Vsevolod. The sermon has often been treated as a separate essay entitled *Instruction on the Punishment of God* (*Pouchenie o kaznyakh bozhiikh*) or *Oration on the Punishment of God* (*Slovo o kaznyakh bozhiikh*),<sup>58</sup> and it opens forcefully:

God in his wrath causes foreigners to attack a nation, and then, when its inhabitants are thus crushed by the invaders, they remember God. Internecine strife is incited by the craft of the devil. For God wishes men not evil but good, while the devil takes his delight in cruel murder and bloodshed, and therefore incites quarrels, envy, domestic strife and slander. When any nation has sinned, God punishes them by death or famine or pagan incursion, by drought or a plague of caterpillars or by other chastisements.<sup>59</sup>

The idea that the wrath of God affected history was typical of medieval man. The consequences of man's fall forced God to act in the human sphere, as God was compelled to discipline man for his own good with various punishments. After Adam's fall human nature was dominated by its less noble traits: fickleness, obstinacy, heedlessness, lust, pride, cruelty, greed and pugnaciousness. Men knew the opposites of these traits, but in their stubbornness refused to embrace their better natures. God in his mercy thus had to intervene, like a father chastising his children, to restore man to his former state of grace. In the Latin west St Augustine (354–430) and especially Orosius (b. ca 375, d. before 418) with

<sup>57</sup> PVL 6576 (1068), 167,14–167,15.

<sup>58</sup> PVL 6576 (1068), 167,14–170,20. This sermon in the *Primary Chronicle* has often been connected with Igumen Feodosiy of the Caves Monastery; yet in fact what we have here in the *Primary Chronicle* is preaching following general Christian rhetoric on this topic. It is surprisingly similar to Patriarch Photius's sermon of 860, which he delivered in Constantinople during the first Rus' attack. A similar text, called *Slovo o vedre i o kasznyakh Bozhiakh* is also known in 12th-century Bulgarian literature. See Nikischenkova 2010; Mil'kov 2000, 19; Cross 1954, 265; Mansikka 1922.

<sup>59</sup> PVL 1068, 167,21–168,2.

his book *Seven Books against the Pagans* influenced historical thought as well as medieval perceptions of history and how God worked therein.<sup>60</sup>

In eastern Christianity the most often cited authority on this question was Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus, ca 325–389), a church father of the fourth century, who in his Oration 16, *On his Father's Silence, Because of the Plague of Hail*, spoke of the wrath of God visited upon humans through natural catastrophes, floods, earthquakes, diseases, fires and the like.<sup>61</sup> Gregory stressed that human sins were the cause of this wrath and that by submitting oneself to God with tears, repentance and most of all by showing love to the poor and unfortunate, man would soften God's heart and thereby avoid punishment. An important aspect of this great church father's instructions was that individual sinners could cause an entire nation to suffer, while individual repentance could prevent the wrath of God from being visited upon a nation.<sup>62</sup>

V. V. Mil'kov states that the idea of the punishment of God (*teoriya kazney bozhiikh*) in the *Primary Chronicle* was derived from the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, that is the case, since the apocalyptic imagery insisted on this theme in speaking of the Ishmaelites:

And thus they [Greeks] too will be exterminated in Gaba'ot by Ishmael, the wild ass of the desert, who was sent in the wrath of ire against men and against animals and against cattle and against trees and against plants. And it is a punishment in which there is no love. And these four leaders will be sent before them against the entire earth, Ruin and Destroyer and Desolation and Despoiler for every existing city. Also it was not because God loves the sons of Ishmael that he granted them entry into the kingdom of the Christians, but because of the iniquity and sin perpetrated by the Christians.<sup>64</sup>

However, the first sermon on the topic of God's wrath in the *Primary Chronicle*, added *sub anno* 1068, did not speak of the Polovtsy as Ishmaelites, but simply as pagans. The shift in terminology when speaking of the Polovtsy changed from pagans to Ishmaelites only with an entry in the year 6601 AM (1093 AD). This was the year when Prince Svyatopolk Michael ascended the Kievan throne, and the *Primary Chronicle* described the Polovtsy as the 'scheming sons of Ishmael' (лукавии сыновье Измаилови).<sup>65</sup> In that entry the *Chronicle's* idea of God's punishment was further developed and the role of pagan nations was discussed as God's punishing weapon of choice:

<sup>60</sup> Figgis 1921, 39; Raymond 1936, 10–12.

<sup>61</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, 247–254.

<sup>62</sup> Ilarion 2000, Section 2, Chapter 2.

<sup>63</sup> Mil'kov 2000, 19, 53.

<sup>64</sup> *Syriac Revelation*. English translation in Alexander 1985, 44; compare *The First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 93.

<sup>65</sup> PVL 6601 (1093), 223,3.

God set the pagans on us, not because he held them dear, but to chastise us that we might abstain from evil deeds. He thus punishes us by the incursions of the pagans, for they are God's cudgels [батоги Божии] that we may repent and turn from our wicked ways.<sup>66</sup>

The *Primary Chronicle* placed the misfortunes taking place in Rus' in a global context, which would shake the whole world and lead to the End Time:

Let no one marvel at these misfortunes: 'For condign chastisement ensues wherever many sins are committed.' For this reason the world shall ultimately be betrayed [Сего ради въселеная предасть ся], for this reason the wrath has been spread abroad, for this reason the land has fallen prey to torment....<sup>67</sup>

This reference to the End Time is understandable, given the closeness of the round date of the year 6600. Not only the close of millennia, but also the centennials stirred apocalyptic restlessness during the Middle Ages.<sup>68</sup> Although it is often stated that millennialism or chiliasm (from Latin and Greek words respectively for 'a thousand') played a minor role in Byzantium, this view, after a century of pushing the matter aside as a myth of millennialism, was again given scholarly scrutiny by Richard Landes in 2000.<sup>69</sup> In 2003 Paul Magdalino convincingly demonstrated how expectations of the coming end were intensified in Byzantium towards the end of the tenth century.<sup>70</sup> Aleksej Gippius demonstrated that the same thing took place in Rus'.<sup>71</sup>

The Byzantine chronological *computus* rested on *anno mundi* (AM, 'in the year of the world'). In this system, the world was believed to have been created 5,508 years before a year which in the western calendar was established as the year of the birth of Christ (a dating suggested by the Anglo-Saxon historian, the Venerable Bede). Thus, in the Byzantine calendar the year 1000 AD was the year 6508 *anno mundi*. Yet neither in Byzantium nor in Rus' was 5508 AM considered to be the date of Incarnation. Throughout the Middle Ages Byzantium clung to the chronology computed in the second and third centuries in Antioch, which placed the birth of Christ 5,500 years after the Creation. This computation was also presented in the *Primary Chronicle* in the Speech of the Philosopher, where a

<sup>66</sup> PVL 6601 (1093), 222,8–222,13.

<sup>67</sup> PVL 6601 (1093), 223,5–223,9.

<sup>68</sup> See Gippius 2003, 162.

<sup>69</sup> Landes 2000, 429–439. For a more thorough treatment of the scholarly tradition in investigating millennialism in eastern Christianity, see Gippius 2003, 157–158.

<sup>70</sup> Magdalino 2003, 233–270.

<sup>71</sup> Gippius 2003, 154–171.

Greek philosopher explained to Prince Vladimir the main points of Christian history.<sup>72</sup> This meant that round jubilee years of centennial dates 6500 AM prompted millennial expectations, and it highlights the importance of the round dates.

As Gippius states, the habit of celebrating and sanctifying round dates already existed in Hebrew legislation of the Old Law, where it was stated that every fiftieth year should be celebrated (Leviticus 25:10). The interest in round dates was further intensified by the idea of the sabbatical millennium, developed by the early Christians. With this eschatological teaching the history of mankind was compared to the biblical week of Creation and divided into seven periods of a thousand years each based on Psalm 90: *'1000 years is a day in the sight of the Lord'*. Hence, the thousand-year kingdom promised in Revelation (20:1) corresponding to the Sabbath of Genesis 1 was supposed to begin in the year 6000.<sup>73</sup>

By this reckoning, the significant dates were the year 6000, corresponding to the end of the day on which God had completed his creation of the world, and the year 7000, corresponding to the day on which God rested from his labours. However, the seventh day of Creation, when God rested, was open-ended and not defined by morning and evening like the previous six. In the course of the millennium from 492 to 1492, the appointment with doomsday was thus frequently rescheduled. Magdalino satisfactorily shows that, of all these intermediate dates, those in the middle of the seventh Byzantine millennium, corresponding to the first Christian millennium, were by far the most important, but after that date every round decennial again fuelled eschatological expectations.<sup>74</sup>

In his article published in 2003 Aleksej Gippius made an in-depth survey of the response to millennialism in Rus', and his results are intriguing. He convincingly pointed out that the Rus' church also observed the decennial jubilees of the church, a matter that was made official in the Catholic Church in 1300, but never officially adopted in eastern Christianity. According to data taken from medieval Russian chronicles, Gippius further demonstrated that at the dawn of every new century, there was increased activity in church building and relic transformations in Rus'.<sup>75</sup>

The year 6600 therefore is of crucial importance for understanding the whole setting of the *Primary Chronicle*. The entries at the turn of decennium for the years 6799 (1091) and 6600 (1092) were full of omens and sightings of celestial bodies; there were solar eclipses, huge serpents falling from the

<sup>72</sup> PVL 102,9–102,10.

<sup>73</sup> See Gippius 2003, 156, 158.

<sup>74</sup> Magdalino 2003, 233–270.

<sup>75</sup> Gippius 2003, 154–171.

sky, witches, haunted devils, Polovtsian armies and deadly diseases.<sup>76</sup> These cosmic events played an important part in apocalyptic prophecies of the Scriptures. The beginning of the rule of Prince Svyatopolk-Michael is a continuation of these fearful signs of the End Time, and it is in relation to this that the shift of terminology used for the Polovtsy acquires a convincing explanation. It is a question of a narrative choice by the chronicler, who is writing about happenings of the End Time. By using the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* as a typological source for the characters of history, the chronicler changed also the rhetoric of war.

With punishment as its central theme, the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* vividly describes the sufferings of the Christians and the cruelties of the Ishmaelites; God allows the Ishmaelites to torture the Christians in various ways, even blaspheming their faith by saying, ‘The Christians have no saviour’.<sup>77</sup>

The typology of blasphemous Ishmaelites is especially clear in the *Primary Chronicle* in the entry describing the attack of the Polovtsy on the Caves Monastery in 1093. This must have been a shocking event, leaving strong personal memories of suffering among the brothers of the monastery, perhaps even with the chronicler himself. The attack depicting a scene of blaspheming Ishmaelites has clear narrative similarities to the *Revelation*:

But God suffered their [Polovtsy] iniquities because their sins, and their transgressions were not completed. Thus they said, ‘Where is their God? Let Him come and deliver them,’ and they made other blasphemous remarks about the holy icons, which they mocked, because they did not know that God punishes his servants by attacks and wars so that they may appear as gold which has been tried in the furnace. The Christians, by virtue of their many sufferings and oppressions, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but these pagans and blasphemers, who in this world enjoy happiness and increase, shall suffer torment at the hand of the devil, since they are destined for everlasting fire.<sup>78</sup>

In preaching that God punishes his flock in this world so that they might escape eternal punishment in the next, the *Chronicle* followed the sermons of many other Christian thinkers. At the same time this idea of punishment required acute suffering<sup>79</sup> and ultimately changed the whole rhetoric of war in the *Primary Chronicle*. In describing the sufferings of the Christians at the hands of the Polovtsy, the chronicler repeated the means of humiliation in the passage from Pseudo-Methodius’s apocalypse

<sup>76</sup> PVL 6799 (1091), 214,14–6600 (1092), 215,26.

<sup>77</sup> English translation of the *Syriac Revelation* by Reinik 1999, 149–152. Compare Alexander 1985, 48, who has obvious mistakes in his translation in this particular passage. Compare the translation in Martinez 1985, 148–149. See also *The First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 97.

<sup>78</sup> PVL (1096), 233,4–233,15.

<sup>79</sup> Patriarch Photius used exactly the same rhetorical devices in 860, when he delivered his two sermons during the first Rus’ attack on Constantinople. See Photius, *Homilies* III and IV.

mentioned above. The image of the tortured citizens of Torzhesk is realistic and heartbreaking; the chronicler depicts them dragged into captivity suffering from cold, hunger and thirst, their tongues parched, their feet bare and dirty.<sup>80</sup>

Even if the *Chronicle*'s description of the cruelties inflicted by the Polovtsy may seem less monstrous compared with other contemporary texts in which the image of the Saracens was blackened during the time of the First Crusade,<sup>81</sup> the change in war rhetoric within the *Primary Chronicle* itself is nevertheless obvious. Earlier wars had produced no such dramatic descriptions of people's sufferings, but suddenly, in the very year that Svyatopolk-Michael became the ruler of Kiev (1093), the tone completely changes. The chronicler himself explained the reasons for the sudden change, for he had a clear vision of how historical events were seen, announcing that the torments taking place in Rus' were part of something bigger:

It was thus the prophet said, 'I will change your feasts into mourning and your songs into lamentations.' For God caused great mourning in our land; our villages and our towns were laid waste, and we fled before our foes. As the prophet said, 'You shall be slain before your enemies; they that hate you shall oppress you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. I will break the arrogance of your pride, and your strength shall be spent in vain. The sword of the stranger will kill you, your land shall be desolate, and your courts laid waste. For you are worthless and contrary, and I will also walk contrary to you in anger, said the Lord God of Israel.' For the malignant sons of Ishmael were burning villages and granges, and many churches were consumed by fire.<sup>82</sup>

These horrors of war serve as an introduction to the impressive high point of the *Chronicle*'s narrative, for eventually God relinquished his anger with the Rus', according to the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, which first described the horrors that the Ishmaelites caused the Christians, but ended with the 'sudden awakening'<sup>83</sup> of the Last Emperor and his triumph. Thus, the heavy losses of the Rus' at the beginning of Svyatopolk-Michael's rule fit the imagery of the *Revelation* perfectly. The one great deviation from that imagery is that it was not the ruler himself, Svyatopolk-Michael, but his cousin, Vladimir Monomakh, who forcefully stepped in as the hero of the triumphant battle of 1103, when 'God on high inspired an awful fear in the Polovtsy, so that terror and trembling beset them at the sight of the Rus' forces, and they wavered.'<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> PVL 6601 (1093), 223,9–225,15.

<sup>81</sup> As claimed by Mikhailova 2013, 50–79.

<sup>82</sup> PVL 6601 (1093), 222,18–223,5.

<sup>83</sup> *The First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 97.

<sup>84</sup> PVL 6611 (1103), 278,21–278,26.



The *Revelation* specifically stated that

...the King of Greece [i.e. the Last Emperor] will seize the places in the desert and will destroy with the sword the remnant left of them in the Promised Land. And the fear of all those around them will fall upon them. They and their wives and their sons and their leaders and all their camps and their entire land in the desert of their fathers will be given into the hands of the kings of the Greeks, and will be given up to desolation and destruction and captivity and murder.<sup>85</sup>

With the enemy destroyed, the *Chronicle* continued with the Pseudo-Methodius theme, telling how the leaders of the Ishmaelites were killed, and specifically depicting how, on the instructions of Prince Vladimir, one of them – a chief called Beldyuz – was beaten to death in punishment for not having kept his vows of peace and for spilling Christian blood.<sup>86</sup> Just as the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* had prophesied that the camps of the enemies would be emptied, so the *Primary Chronicle* rejoiced in the Rus' victory in 1103:

Thereafter, all the kinsmen gathered together, and Vladimir exclaimed, 'This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. For the Lord has freed us from our foes, and put down our enemies, and crushed the serpents' heads. He has given them as food to the men of Rus'.' They [the Rus'] thus seized sheep and cattle, horses and camels, tents with booty and slaves, and they captured Pechenegs and Torks together with their tents. They then returned to Rus' carrying great spoils, with glory and a great victory won.<sup>87</sup>

Given the narrative strategy of the *Primary Chronicle*, it is clear that historical events demanded the presence of the Last Emperor on the scene, a perfect match with the images from the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*. And given the timing of the Emperor's rise to the Kievan throne, what could be more fitting than to accentuate the apocalyptic essence of the numbered years, which the *Chronicle* so devotedly had recorded beginning with the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Michael. Prince Svyatopolk-Michael together with his cunning cousin of shrewd military expertise were marked with the recognisable features of the Last Emperor, the one who would defeat the Ishmaelites. In the next and last section of this article, I will demonstrate how this identification worked.

<sup>85</sup> *Syriac Revelation*, English translation in Alexander 1983, 48–49. Compare the *First Slavonic Translation* in Istrin 1897, 97–98.

<sup>86</sup> PVL 6611 (1103), 279,3–279,19.

<sup>87</sup> PVL 6611 (1103), 279,19–279,28.

## Apocalyptic Michael

By applying Pseudo-Methodius's imagery to the Polovtsy as the villains of the End Time, the *Primary Chronicle* fundamentally changed the role of the Kievan prince, turning him into an eschatological figure. This connection gained strength from the cult of the Archangel Michael. Michael had a messianic role as the Prince of Light who fought the Prince of Darkness; as the commander-in-chief of the host of angels, he naturally assumed the task of Protector of God's Chosen People.<sup>88</sup> Michael's attribute was light, and the scriptural definition of his angelic nature was fire and wind (Ps. 104:4).

The tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed an extraordinary increase in interest in the Archangel, especially in the years 950–1050, thanks to the Christianisation of warfare and the discovery of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius in western Europe in the ninth century, which acknowledged the hierarchy of spirits and recognised the function of archangels as messengers. Also in this period the apocalyptic role of the Archangel increased in importance because of the imagery of Michael's role in the Last Judgement and in the previous wars of the empire. The connection between the Cross and the Archangel Michael is especially interesting.<sup>89</sup> The *Primary Chronicle* is almost obsessed with the sign of the Cross, which is the ultimate Christian emblem of triumph over the forces of darkness, as demonstrated in its stories of demons.<sup>90</sup>

In the settings of medieval worship, where miracle-working relics were central, the cult of angels was problematic, because angels, not being physical in their essence, could not produce relics. However, as a bodiless and imageless object of veneration the Archangel Michael had his own means of demonstrating his essence and being: he frequently appeared in the countryside, often on mountain tops, manifesting himself in fiery pillars.<sup>91</sup> The high hills of Kiev were the perfect place for the angel of the Chosen People to appear.

This angelic manifestation – a fiery pillar – was seen in the Caves Monastery of Kiev on 11 February 6618 (1110 AD). The monastery was exactly the kind of place in which the Archangel manifested elsewhere in Europe during that time – on sacred mountains where churches were carved within the

<sup>88</sup> Especially in Qumran text 1 QM 17.6–8a. See Hannah 1999, 54, 64–65.

<sup>89</sup> See Callahan 2003, 182–183, 191–193.

<sup>90</sup> The *Primary Chronicle* frequently discusses demons and the Antichrist, who are described as dwelling in an abyss until the final days of the world. The chronicle harnesses the Cross in the battle against these forces, as presented in the lively story of demons harassing Brother Isaac in PVL 6582 (1074), 196,25–197,3. See also PVL 6579 (1071), 177,9–177,18; PVL 6579 (1071), 179,20–180,6. The *Primary Chronicle* makes strong claims for the right dogma of venerating the Cross, frequently discussing its power. PVL 6496 (988), 114,14–144,18; PVL 6576 (1068), 172,13–173,1; PVL 6586 (1078), 203,29–204,6; PVL 6599 (1091), 214,4–214,10. The power of the Cross is particularly emphasised in the inter-princely pacts, which were sealed by kissing the Cross. See PVL 6576 (1068), 172,12–173,3; PVL 6605 (1097), 257,6–257,10.

<sup>91</sup> Monte Gargano in Italy is a place par excellence for the cult of Michael in western Europe, and its cave church was imitated by other cultic places, where rough-hewn churches placed on mountain tops became symbols of the Archangel's presence. Peers 2001, 170–171.

rocks. Psellus (1018–1081) gives an interesting description of a miracle which took place in Asia Minor similar to the fiery pillar of the Caves Monastery: in both places a fiery pillar was seen at the Church of the Mother of God.<sup>92</sup> The *Primary Chronicle* remarks that the fiery pillar at the Caves Monastery was that of an angel who foretold that the Rus' forces would later march under the leadership of this angel to confront the Polovtsy:

During the same year, there was a portent in the Cave Monastery on February 11: a fiery pillar appeared, which reached from earth to heaven, its lightning illuminated the whole land, and thunder was heard in the sky at the first hour of the night. The whole world saw this. The pillar stood over the stone refectory, so that its cross could not be seen, and after remaining there awhile, entered into the church, and halted over the tomb of Feodosiy. Then it rose, as if facing to the east, and forthwith became invisible.

This was not an actual pillar of fire, but an angelic manifestation: for an angel appears thus, either as a pillar of fire or as a flame. As David has said, 'He makes His angels winds and his servants a flaming fire', and they are sent forth by the will of God, according to the desire of the Lord and Creator of all things. For an angel appears wherever there are blessed abodes and houses of prayer, and they exhibit such portion of their aspect as it is possible for men to look upon. Indeed, it is impossible for men to behold angelic form, for even the mighty Moses could not view the angelic being: for a pillar of cloud led them by day and a pillar of fire by night, but it was not a pillar that led them, but an angel went ahead of them during the day and night. This apparition indicated an event which was destined to take place, and its presage was later realised. For in the following year, was not an angel the guide of our princes against our foreign foes (иноплемьники супостаты)? Even as it is written: 'An angel shall go before you', and again, 'Your angel be with you? [sic]'<sup>93</sup>

Right after this, the *Primary Chronicle* ends in the Laurentian manuscript, followed by the colophon of Igumen Sylvester:

In the hope of God's grace, I, Sylvester, Igumen of St. Michael's, wrote this chronicle in the year 6624 [1116 AD], the ninth of the indiction, during the reign of Prince Vladimir in Kiev, while I was presiding over St Michael's monastery.

May whosoever reads this book remember me in his prayers.<sup>94</sup>

92 Michael Psellus, *Oration on the Miracles of the Archangel Michael*, 238.179–239.192. The English translation in Peers 2001, 172–173.

93 PVL 6618 (1110), 284,5–285,7. See also Likhachev 1996, 541.

94 *Lavrent'evskaya letopis'*, 274. When Monk Lavrentiy wrote his parchment manuscript, he used a chronicle written up to the year 1305 as his source. But this source had many *lacunae*, and it also lacked the ending of the *Primary Chronicle*. It has therefore been suggested that Monk Sylvester's colophon must have been written on a separate leaf for it to have survived. See Likhachev 1996, 541; O. Tolochko 2008, 130–139.

The *Primary Chronicle*, as it appears in the Laurentian manuscript, thus ends abruptly with the story of a miracle.<sup>95</sup> When compared to the Hypatian manuscript (and manuscripts related to it) of the *Chronicle*, it is obvious that the Laurentian manuscript ending is a torso and lacks its final pages. What complicates the matter is that in the Hypatian branch of manuscripts, the *Primary Chronicle* does not have a clear break, but continues by following the reigns of the Kievan rulers of the twelfth century. On stylistic evidence it has been argued that the *Primary Chronicle* in the Hypatian manuscript ends with the entry for the year 1117 AD.<sup>96</sup> The argument clearly contradicts the fact that Igumen Sylvester wrote his copy of the chronicle in 1116. Hypotheses about the later redactions of the *Primary Chronicle* are very complicated, since no surviving manuscripts represent a ‘pure’ text with the original ending of the *Primary Chronicle* or a ‘pure’ version of Sylvester.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, in order to understand the narrative setting of the *Primary Chronicle*, I argue that it is essential to examine the *Chronicle*’s ending in the Hypatian manuscript. Even though we cannot evaluate its source value in comparison to the no longer extant ‘original’ ending, the Hypatian manuscript is the only text to preserve the last events of the *Primary Chronicle*. Therefore, I will continue with the miraculous sign that took place in the Caves Monastery on 11 February 1110 and its explanation, for which the chronicler followed the *Chronicle of George Hamartolus*,<sup>98</sup> quoted at length in the next annual entry. The continuation of the *Primary Chronicle* in the Hypatian manuscript states that without God’s favour, the Christian Rus’ princes were powerless, but because of their prayers and their appeal to the Mother of God, God’s heart was softened and he sent his angel to the Rus’ princes.<sup>99</sup> Making an analogy between the pagan Hellenistic troops of Alexander the Macedonian who conquered Jerusalem and the pagan Polovtsy who fought against Kiev in his own time, the chronicler explained that sometimes “because of our sins” God permits these attacks to take place. He then continues with discussion on the role of angels, explaining that each nation, including even a pagan one, has its own angel. However,

95 PVL 6616 (1110), 284,56–285,7.

96 Shakhmatov noted that the colourful style of the chronicle’s ending belongs to the writer who penned the angelological explanations and that this style was last represented in the entry for the year 6625 (1117 AD), which referred to the death of the Byzantine Emperor Aleksey the following year, on 15 August 1118. Shakhmatov 1916; published also in Shakhmatov 2003, 257–977. About the ending of the *Primary Chronicle*, see also Franchuk 1986, 3; Likhachev 1996, 121–129; Likhacheva 1987, 236; Tolochko 2010, 820; Gippius 2010, 1228.

97 According to Shakhmatov’s theory, also the Laurentian manuscript has features belonging to the latest, ‘third’ redaction of the *Primary Chronicle*, written in 1118 AD. On the hypothesis of Aleksey Shakhmatov, see Shakhmatov 1898, 116–130 and Shakhmatov 1914, 31–53, both published also in Shakhmatov 2003, 144, 413–427.

98 See the Fourth Book, chapter 61, of the *Chronicle of George the Monk*, *Knigi vremennye i obraznye Georgiya Monakha*, in Matveenko & Shchegoleva 2011, 203–208. The *Chronicle of George Hamartolus* in turn had been influenced by the work of a 4th-century bishop, Epiphanius of Salamis, called ‘Anchoratus’ (The Anchor of the Faith or the Firmly Anchored Man), consisting of his writings against Arianism, the teachings of Origen and other heresies. See Likhachev 1996, 541.

99 *Ipat’evskaya letopis’*, 6618 (1110), 191.

Christian nations have a significant advantage, as each Christian has his own angel-protector, and here we come to the significance of the angelic protector of our Prince Svyatopolk-Michael:

But let be it known that the Christians do not have just one angel, but many, as there are many who are baptised, and let us emphasise that every Orthodox prince has his angel, but these cannot resist God's will, but they do pray assiduously on behalf of the Christians. And thus it happened: because of the prayers of the Holy Mother of God and the Holy Angels, God became merciful, and He sent the angels to help the princes of Rus' against the pagans.<sup>100</sup>

As we can see, the *Chronicle* emphasises the role of a personal guardian angel for each Orthodox prince. For the Rus', this meant a guardian angel for its ruling Prince Svyatopolk – none other than the Archangel Michael himself.

Earlier in this article it was mentioned that in the later Slavonic version of the *Revelation* the Last Emperor was called by the name Michael. Just when the name was attached to the figure of the Last Emperor is impossible to know. It is possible that this had already happened during the time of Boris-Michael of Bulgaria in the late ninth century, but the *Primary Chronicle* gives a clear indication that if not already adopted, the image was certainly in use when the Chronicle was written in Kiev in the early twelfth century. Prince Svyatopolk's guardian angel played a key role in the Rus' victory over the Polovtsy, and thus Svyatopolk-Michael's name was implied as being a likely source of the apocalyptic imagery in the *Chronicle*.

The *Interpolated Slavonic Redaction* of the *Revelation* depicts the victory of the Emperor Michael against the Ishmaelites thus:

But he [Michael] will rise up as if awakened from sleep, take up his sword and say: 'Bring me a swift horse.' He will go against them [the Ishmaelites] with great fury and raise his sword against them. God's angel, who at first was with them, will be with Michael against them. And their [the Ishmaelites'] hearts will turn weak like water, and their bodies will melt like wax, and they will lose their manliness. And they will perish from fear, not being able to look at the strength of God. And then the Emperor [царь] Michael will conquer the countless numbers of Ishmaelites, and some of them will be scattered like cattle.<sup>101</sup>

Essentially, this is what takes place among the Polovtsy in the *Primary Chronicle*'s continuation as represented in the Hypatian manuscripts in the description of the war of 1111: the combatants become

<sup>100</sup> *Ipat'evskaya letopis'*, 6618 (1110), 190–191.

<sup>101</sup> *Interpolated Slavonic Redaction* in Istrin 1897, 123–124. Also in Mil'kov 2000, 357.

frightened of the terrifying sight of the Archangel Michael, who slaughters the Polovtsy right before the eyes of the Rus' troops.

In a witty dialogue with his cousin Svyatopolk, Vladimir Monomakh is depicted in the *Primary Chronicle* entries for 1103 and 1111 as the warrior of God and initiator of the Polovtsy wars.<sup>102</sup> The preparations for the 1111 campaign were immense, and many princes joined in. First, the Rus' troops took the city of Sharukan, and the priests are depicted as singing liturgical melodies at the command of Vladimir Monomakh as his men storm the city. The noble Rus' warriors gaze heavenward with tears in their eyes as they march through the gates of the conquered city. Then, somewhere near the River Don on the 24th of March, the Rus' confront the Polovtsy. The *Chronicle* informs us how 'God on high directed His fearsome eyes at the strangers (на иноплеменников), and they began to fall in front of the Christians.'<sup>103</sup>

After a few days the two armies met again, and God was again on the side of the Rus'. The *Chronicle* depicts the battle of the 27th of March as follows: 'And before the troops of Vladimir the Polovtsy fell, killed by an invisible angel; the occasion was testified to by many, as heads flew to the ground smitten by the unseen.'<sup>104</sup> The captured Polovtsy prisoners lamented that they had no chance of victory when the Rus' had such a terrifying image flying before their troops, carrying shiny and frightening weapons. The chronicler then comes to the conclusion that the angel seen in the Caves Monastery a few months earlier had been the same angel who gave Vladimir Monomakh the idea of going to war.<sup>105</sup> At the end of this entry the chronicler states:

As Ioann Zlatoust [Chrysostomos] said, it is appropriate to praise angels, for they pray to the Creator to be forever merciful and favourable towards the people. Let me tell you: the angels are our saviours when we fight the forces against us, and their commander is the Archangel Michael.<sup>106</sup>

With this miraculous victory the narrative reaches its high point, which represents the whole purpose of the *Primary Chronicle*, namely to depict the rise of the Rus' from barbarian oblivion to their place as the new Chosen People of God:

<sup>102</sup> PVL 6611 (1103), 277,1–277,18 and Ipat'evskaya letopis', 6619 (1111), 191.

<sup>103</sup> Ipat'evskaya letopis', 6619 (1111), 192. The exact geographical location of the River Degey is uncertain. See the commentary in Likhachev 1996, 543.

<sup>104</sup> Ipat'evskaya letopis', 6619 (1111), 193.

<sup>105</sup> Ipat'evskaya letopis', 6619 (1111), 193.

<sup>106</sup> Ipat'evskaya letopis', 6619 (1111), 193.



Likewise now, with the help of God, and with the help of the prayers of the Mother of God and the holy angels, the Rus' princes came back followed by great renown, which spread to all people, even to the most remote places, to Greeks, Ugry [the Hungarians], Lyakhi [the Poles], and Czechs, even to distant Rome itself, in praise of God; now and always, and forever and ever, Amen.<sup>107</sup>

It was clearly important to the chronicler to prove first of all to the Greeks and other nations that Rus' was fighting with God on its side. When God finally relented towards the Rus' princes, he allowed the guardian angel of its ruling prince to assist in the victory over the pagans. Given that Michael was the arch-strategist, the protector of God's Chosen People, Kiev was made into a New Jerusalem and the Rus', God's Chosen People. Therefore, the happenings of the Final Days did not necessarily need the 'Old' Jerusalem. In this regard Rus' was fighting its Crusade on Kievan soil.

I. N. Danilevskiy was certainly right to stress that a chronicle is ultimately a way of narrating a typology between sacred texts and real events.<sup>108</sup> This notion has had surprisingly little impact on studies of the *Primary Chronicle*, and recent discussions about the Archangel Michael's role have failed to make a thorough typology between the narrative in the *Primary Chronicle* and that in the Sacred Writings.<sup>109</sup> A. V. Laushkin, in his criticism of Danilevskiy, stated that there is little similarity between the Polovtsy of the *Primary Chronicle* and the Ishmaelites of the Bible.<sup>110</sup> I argue that Laushkin is missing the point: for our Kievan chronicler the biblical books were not the only sacred texts. Even though high theology never embraced popular apocalypses like the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, it is clear that for our chronicler the *Revelation* was a sacred text. Not only does the narrative of the *Primary Chronicle* use the imagery of the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius*, but also in its pages the apocalyptic expectations and millennial fears of contemporary Kievans are fully expressed. This is further evident in the entry describing the death of Prince Svyatopolk.

Prince Svyatopolk-Michael died in the year 6621 (1113 AD), an event that was predicted by terrifying celestial signs involving the sun. After the prince's death, Kiev erupted into chaos and anarchy; violent riots broke out, and Svyatopolk's leading officials were attacked, as were the Jews of Kiev.<sup>111</sup> In Soviet historiography the riots were interpreted as a reaction by the lower class to the strained economic

<sup>107</sup> *Ipat'evskaya letopis'*, 6619 (1111), 196.

<sup>108</sup> Danilevskiy 1993, 78–92, especially 79.

<sup>109</sup> Kotyshev 2012, 47–51. Also Vladimir Petrukhin gave a cautious evaluation of the role of Svyatopolk-Michael, stating prudently that the reference to the Byzantine Emperor Michael at the beginning of the Rus' annals might have been important, as Michael was the emperor of the End Times in the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. Petrukhin 2000, 72, 98–99.

<sup>110</sup> Laushkin 2013, 76–86. See also Ranchin & Laushkin 2002, 125–137.

<sup>111</sup> *Ipat'evskaya letopis'*, 6621 (1113), 197–198.

situation; when Vladimir Monomakh finally stepped in to calm the riotous masses, he was seen as a strong ruler who protected the lower working class from the greedy feudal upper class.<sup>112</sup> However, I would like to point out that in a context in which signs predicting the end of the world were regularly sought, the attack against the Jews has to be placed in a larger framework. One cannot overlook the fact that around the time of the First Crusade the atmosphere vis-à-vis the Jewish populace was strained everywhere in Europe, especially in Germany, where the Crusaders turned against the Jews before their departure for the Holy Land in 1096.<sup>113</sup> As Matthew Gabriele has recently shown, the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* was a major spiritual stimulus that fuelled the pogroms by these crusaders. Gabriele points out that the attack on the Jews in towns of the Rhineland in May 1096 was inspired by the militant and warlike images of the *Revelation* and that Count Emicho, who led the German crusaders, presented himself as the Last Emperor who was going to liberate Jerusalem from the infidels.<sup>114</sup>

In the sermons and teachings of the Kievan clergy the Jews were often dealt with by emphasising their false teachings.<sup>115</sup> Medieval anti-Semitism arose from Christian views of Jews, who, in light of sacred history, were the perpetrators of wrongdoing against Christ. The attitude evolved into more deep-seated antagonism, with Jews labelled subhuman evil sorcerers, an image that gained more and more ground from the eleventh century on. The increasingly popular view of Jews as unbelieving Christ-killers and usurers made them more dependent than ever on the protection of secular authorities. In return for a large share of profit, kings and princes were willing to protect the Jews.<sup>116</sup> What took place in Kiev in the year 1113 could reflect the fact that with Svyatopolk's death the Jews lost their protector. However, in the light of *Primary Chronicle*'s typology one could assume that our chronicler was not isolated in his interest in the End Time. Therefore, I argue that the *Chronicle* most likely reflected the general apocalyptic tensions felt throughout Europe during the time of the First Crusades. After all, the faith of Jerusalem was important to our chronicler, and this faith continued to be important in the later twelfth-century Kievan chronicle.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>112</sup> This was supposedly reflected in the law code Prostrannaya Russkaya Pravda. Grekov 1953, 496–498; Tikhomirov 1955. See also Likhachev 1996, 544–545.

<sup>113</sup> Langmuir 1990, 301–304.

<sup>114</sup> Gabriele 2007, 61–82.

<sup>115</sup> Already ustav of Yaroslav Vladimirovich had strictly forbidden any relations between Christians and Jews, and the same was done in the Teaching of Feodosiy, who taught that Jews who lived in Kiev must be considered as enemies of God. Metropolitan Ioann II of Kiev, in his canonical answer No 22, warned his flock against selling their sons and daughters to Jewish slave-traders, whom he considered 'lawless' (bezzakonniki). *Kanonicheskie otvety Kievskogo Mitropolita Ioanna II*, 1–18.

<sup>116</sup> Langmuir 1990, 301–303.

<sup>117</sup> PVL 165,25; Ipat'evskaya letopis' 6695 (1187), 441; 6698 (1190), 449.

Why then was Prince Svyatopolk's death such a frightening experience for the people of Kiev? According to the *Revelation*, when the Last Emperor dies, the Antichrist would be revealed and the end of the world was nigh. Pseudo-Methodius had specifically stated that the Antichrist was a descendant of Dan,<sup>118</sup> thereby implying that he would be born in the Jewish community. In that context it was little wonder that the Kievans were restless.

Ultimately, Prince Svyatopolk remains a distant figure in the *Primary Chronicle*, for it is his cousin Vladimir Monomakh who steals the show as the narrative's hero: it was he who stepped in to slay the pagans, with the narrative theme showing an interesting similarity to the last battles of the 'Greek king' against the Ishmaelites. The joyous tone of the *Primary Chronicle* after the victories over the Polovtsy resembles that of the *Revelation*, when the Ishmaelites had been defeated and a great period of prosperity began. The Ishmaelites, who earlier had subjugated the Christians, were in turn subjugated after the emperor's victory. But even though Svyatopolk-Michael was a prince of Kiev, the hero of these wars was clearly his cousin and the chief commander of the Rus' troops, Vladimir Monomakh. The last two princes in the *Primary Chronicle*, Svyatopolk-Michael and Vladimir Monomakh, make up a ruling pair, in which the apocalyptic significance of the Last Emperor is reflected in the image of both.

The shift of power from Svyatopolk to Monomakh seems to be central to the problematic presentation of the two Kievan princes; certainly it has been central to scholars trying to reconstruct the process of creating the *Primary Chronicle*. The 'classical' theory of Alexey Shakhmatov rested on the hypothesis that after the death of Svyatopolk, when Vladimir Monomakh had taken the throne of Kiev, the new ruler commissioned a heavily edited version of the *Chronicle*, and its emphasis was changed to allow a valiant, orthodox, pious and ideal ruler – Vladimir Monomakh – to step forth. Shakhmatov, in explaining why no traces of the earlier chronicle, which supposedly was more favourable to Svyatopolk, have survived, suggested that all copies of the earlier volume were destroyed.<sup>119</sup> But it is of utmost importance to point out that Shakhmatov's theory is still mere hypothesis, with no textual basis.<sup>120</sup>

In this article I have argued that the image of the Last Emperor was essential to the compiler of the *Primary Chronicle*. In interpreting the famous revelation, the chronicler saw the prophecy taking place on Rus' soil. I further argue that the juxtaposition of Svyatopolk and Vladimir Monomakh was not an issue for our chronicler. Both rulers had St Michael as their patron saint. For Svyatopolk, Michael was a namesake and a personal guardian angel, in whose honour the ruler built a lavishly decorated

<sup>118</sup> See Istrin 1897, 209.

<sup>119</sup> Shakhmatov 1916; reprinted in 2003, 537–538.

<sup>120</sup> See also Tolochko, P. 2008, 130–139.

golden-domed church in Kiev. For Vladimir Monomakh, Michael was a patron of his family's monastery in Vydbich – a monastery in which the Igumen Silvester wrote his copy of the *Primary Chronicle* in the year 1116. In the end both rulers imparted crucial features to the Last Emperor, Svyatopolk with his name – Michael – as I have demonstrated in this article. For Vladimir Monomakh it was his Greek heritage which made him equally fit for the typology. When Prince Svyatopolk-Michael died and the world did not come to an end, his cousin assumed the role of the Last Emperor by virtue of his origin, for Vladimir Monomakh's birth was specifically foretold in the *Primary Chronicle*: 'Vsevolod had a son, Volodimir, by the daughter of a *Greek* emperor' [отъ цѣсарицѣ Гръкынѣ] [*italics added*].<sup>121</sup>

The *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* specifically underlined the Greek origin of the empire, deriving its royal bloodline from the first world-ruler, Alexander the Great. His Greek bloodline came into the Byzantine Empire through his mother, who was a daughter of an Ethiopian king, Cush, and who after Alexander's death was given as a wife to the Greek king Byzas, a founder of the city of Byzantium.<sup>122</sup> This lineage was of great significance in the *Revelation*, which depended heavily on Psalm 68:31, where in the Syriac Bible, Peshitta, it is stated that at the end of time Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.<sup>123</sup> In the *Revelation* this moment took place when the last Greek king, a descendant of Cush, placed his crown on the Cross at Golgotha with his own hands. In the powerful imagery of the *Revelation* the Last Emperor – who is actually identified as a Greek king throughout the *Revelation* – hands over his kingdom to God, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of David.

Both the Syriac original of the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* and its Greek translations call the Last Emperor a 'Greek king'. The kingdom of Rome is mentioned a few times, but always with the clarification that it was a kingdom of the Greeks.<sup>124</sup> In the *Slavonic Revelation*, both in the tenth-century and the fourteenth-century translations, the title for a Greek king was Greek emperor, a царь.<sup>125</sup> The *Third Interpolated Slavonic Redaction* of Pseudo-Methodius's *Revelation* called the emperor 'Tsar Michael', but no longer emphasised his Greek heritage.<sup>126</sup> In this dual representation of the Last Emperor in the *Primary Chronicle*, Svyatopolk is connected with the figure through his name, and Vladimir

121 PVL 6561 (1053) 160,29–160,31.

122 See the original *Syriac Revelation*, English translation in Alexander 1986, 41–42. Compare *The First Slavonic Translation*, 90–91. The 11th-century *Short Latin Redaction* of the *Revelation* talks about the war of the Ishmaelites against *regnum romanorum*, and its emperor is called *imperator Graecorum, rex Romanorum et Graecorum or rex Romanorum*. See the *Short Latin Redaction* in Istrin 1897, 82.

123 See Alexander 1985, 19.

124 It was only in the later variants of the *Visions of Daniel* that the title of Greek king was replaced by a term more familiar in Byzantine official terminology, such as the Greek or Roman emperor. See Alexander 1978, 3–4.

125 *The First Slavonic Translation*, in Istrin 1897, 91–92, 97–99. The *Second Slavonic Translation*, in Istrin 1897, 107, 112.

126 See *The Interpolated Slavonic Revelation* in Istrin 1897, 123–129.

Monomakh, through his Greek origins. Both Svyatopolk and Vladimir Monomakh thus had attributes associated with the Last Emperor.

I suggest that what we see in the *Primary Chronicle's* relatively pale role of the Last Emperor Svyatopolk – in contrast to his heroic warrior cousin Vladimir Monomakh – is a consequence of accommodation and resignation due to the failure of the expected end to arrive. Those in Kiev who felt the closeness of the End Time must have been on their guard when Svyatopolk-Michael died. In fact, as the *Chronicle* itself testifies, the long delay in placing a new ruler on the Kievan throne after Svyatopolk's death makes one question whether there were not many who believed that the normal everyday routines were over and Christ's Second Coming was near. But the world did not come to an end, and eventually a new ruler ascended the Kievan throne. What happened to the image of the Last Emperor, an image that was so splendidly constructed in the chronicle to fit Rus' history and the idea of the numbered temporary years to fit the typology of the sacred writings? The image survived, as it is in the nature of strong mental images to survive, given that images in general are built on easily recognizable and stereotypical constraints of human minds that fight everyday facts. Two great medievalists, Aron Gurevich and Jacques Le Goff, wrote about the power of mental images. Gurevich spoke about collective memory, which in this apocalyptic concept I have referred to as a mental image, and about the importance of equating the bearers of the same name.<sup>127</sup> Le Goff for his part spoke about the concept of translation and the importance of analogy, remarking that 'the only things and people who really existed were those which recalled something or someone who had already existed.'<sup>128</sup> This is what the power of Svyatopolk-Michael's image rested on. The image was so splendidly constructed that, when the Greekness of Vladimir Monomakh offered a way to secure and nurture the typology of the Last Emperor, the entire worldview of the chronicle was saved.

## Conclusion

The concept of the Rus' as the Chosen People, singled out by Providence, turned the battle against the pagan Polovtsy into a Christian mission. The fact that a Rus' Christian mission was directed against pagans, not Muslims, has led many scholars to confuse the role of the Polovtsy in the Rus' wars. Mark Batunsky, for example, argued that Russia's intellectual elite received a fully developed theory of Islam from Byzantium, distorting the historical reality in subjugating the Polovtsy to represent the Byzantine war against Islam. Batunsky further claimed that the manner in which the Rus' writers treated the

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<sup>127</sup> Gurevich 1990, 50.

<sup>128</sup> Le Goff 1988, 171.

confrontation with the ‘Hagarians’ was more pragmatic than either the Latin West or the Byzantine East.<sup>129</sup> I find this argument ill-grounded, for it seems obvious that the Kievan chronicler was a full-fledged heir to a long Christian tradition. The fact that the Rus’ were fighting the Polovtsy and that the Crusaders in the Holy Land were facing the Muslim Arabs was insignificant: in both cases, Christians faced non-Christians, and most important, they faced people who fit the eschatological image of the Ishmaelites.

Recently, Tsvetelin Stepanov raised the question of the impact of Pseudo-Methodius’s apocalypse on the *Primary Chronicle*, claiming that the *Chronicle* does not contain any allusions to the image of the Last Emperor, which in his mind would have been ideologically impossible in Kievan Rus’, where there was no claim of having imperial rule under a tsar.<sup>130</sup> I believe Simon Franklin was absolutely right when he argued that, for Kievan Rus’, a Byzantine emperor was a figure distant from the Byzantine sources – a figure who had a central place in Byzantine universalism, but no place in Rus’.<sup>131</sup> I argue that the *Primary Chronicle* presents a view in which a Byzantine emperor was completely replaced by a Rus’ian *knyaz*, with Kievan soil substituted for Jerusalem’s.

Most important, Stepanov failed to make convincing arguments for the role of the Polovtsy as the archenemy of Rus’, confusing and entangling them with the role of Islam in the image of the Ishmaelites.<sup>132</sup> In the *Primary Chronicle* the sons of Ishmael were pagans, a fact that was very important for its narrative choice. The original apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius never claimed any religious beliefs for the Ishmaelites, only maintaining that they were not Christians, which became apparent as they mocked the Christians while humiliating them.<sup>133</sup> This detail also figured in the *Primary Chronicle*, in a 1096 description of the Polovtsy attack on the Caves Monastery, when the Polovtsy laughed at the terrified monks and asked: ‘Where is their God?’<sup>134</sup> The paganism of the Polovtsy was crucial when it came to the *Chronicle*’s idea of God’s punishment, for the *Chronicle* specifically stated that God allowed pagans to be the instrument of his anger. On the other hand, the paganism of the Polovtsy was fundamentally marked by eschatological typology, which has too often been sidelined by historians.<sup>135</sup>

In closing, I am calling for an understanding of the ideological imagery of the *Primary Chronicle*, a text born in a culture in which the novelty and importance of written documents shaped completely

<sup>129</sup> Batunsky 1986, 4, 8, 22–27.

<sup>130</sup> Stepanov 2011a, 148–163, especially 153. Published also in Stepanov 2011b, 335–353.

<sup>131</sup> Franklin 1983; published also in Franklin 2002.

<sup>132</sup> Stepanov 2011a and Stepanov 2011b, *passim*.

<sup>133</sup> See n78.

<sup>134</sup> PVL 6604 (1096), 233,6.

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, Mikhailova 2013, 50–79, and Ostrowski 2011, 229–253.



new ways of thinking as well as the identity of men. The rapprochement between the oral and written traditions began to play a decisive role in the organisation of experience and established the relation of human actions to the formal, written models by which random historical events could be ordered. The writing down of events gave rise to unprecedented parallels between literature and life and advanced a fundamental process of categorisation.<sup>136</sup> It is therefore essential to read the *Primary Chronicle of Kiev* as a product of categorisation, made in the spirit of universal chronicles, but in a very original and independent manner, wherein the passing years play a decisive role.

In this respect, as a model of categorisation the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* played a significant role in shaping the content of the *Primary Chronicle*. By making the narrative choice to cast the Polovtsy in the image of the Ishmaelites, our chronicler also had to find other equivalents to fit his eschatological imagery. Prince Svyatopolk of Kiev was thereby positioned to fit the image of the Last Emperor. In particular, the participation of the Archangel Michael turned the campaigns of Prince Svyatopolk and his cousin Vladimir into the final battles of the world. The archangel with a key role in popular apocalypses was the heavenly protector of Prince Svyatopolk of Kiev, and his name became central to the formation of Svyatopolk's identity and political career.<sup>137</sup> Together with the fact that the world did not end when Prince Svyatopolk died in 1113, these events caused the Rus' to claim yet another 'last' emperor, as Vladimir Monomakh with his claim to Greek lineage fit the role of the Last Emperor very well.

With this imagery the *Primary Chronicle* forcefully demonstrated how the earlier Byzantine images associated with Rus' as the nation of Gog and Magog were incorrect and suggested an alternative interpretation of the world order. In that alternative the *Primary Chronicle* delivered a coherent narrative with a universal message that showed how the Polovtsy were the true instruments of God's wrath. In that plan of salvation, the Rus' rulers had a specific mission, carried out under the leadership of its last ruler and his heavenly protector, the Archangel Michael.

<sup>136</sup> See Stock 1983, 3–4.

<sup>137</sup> *Nomen est omen* was an immensely important narrative clue that greatly enriched the medieval imagination. It also inspired the image of Alexander Nevskiy (1220–1263), whose image in his Life was seen as a parallel to that of his namesake, Alexander the Great, 'who never lost a battle'. See Isoaho 2006, 22–27. See also my previous articles in Mäki-Petäys 1999, 163–180; Mäki-Petäys 2002, 81–95, and Isoaho 2005, 284–301.

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